

Message Text

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SUBJ: GOG DEMARCHE TO BETHLEHEM STEEL

1. GAVARY (DIRECTOR SETIMEG) TOLD ME MAY 24 THAT PRESIDENT BONGO DETERMINED TO PRESS FOR ACTION BY SOMIFER REOPENING OF BELINGA ORE MINE. BONGO BELIEVESTHAT FACT CONSTRUCTION FIRST STAGE OF RAILROAD (OWENDO-BOOUE) WILL DEFINITELY BEGIN EARLY 1975 AND THAT GABONESE RESOURCES ADEQUATE TO OPEN POSSIBILITIES FOR SECOND AND THIRD STAGES, SHOULD BRING NEW ELEMENTS WHICH CAN INDUCE SOMIFER TO REVISE THEIR CALENDAR. BONGO ANXIOUS TO EXPLOIT HIS IRON BEFORE TOO MANY OTHER BLACK AFRICAN SOURCES DEVELOPED.

2. FOR ABOVE REASONS BONGO HAS DECIDED TO:

A. REPLACE DE L'EPINE AS PRESIDENT OF SOMIFER BY GABONESE (POSSIBLY MINISTER OF STATE RAWIRI). GAVARY ADDED THAT THIS PERFECTLY NATURAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE HANDLED APPROPRIATELY AND WOULD CAUSE NO HURT FEELINGS BY DE L'EPINE.

B. SEND RAWIRI ON OFFICIAL MISSION TO CONSULT WITH BETHLEHEM AROUND JUNE 10 TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES OF SETTING DATE FOR OPEINING OF MINE.

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C. SEND PURELY PRIVATE MISSION CONSISTING OF GAVARY

(PLUS INTERPRETER) TO PROCEED RAWIRI MISSION (ARRIVING AT BETHLEHEM AROUND JUNE 7 OR 8) TO DISCUSS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF PROBLEMS. GAVARY FELT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO PRESENT SOME USEFUL ELEMENTS TO BETHLEHEM. GAVARY WOULD THEN STAY ON DURING OFFICIAL MEETING AS TECHNICAL ADVISER TO MINISTER RAWIRI.

3. GAVARY ASKED ME TO PASS ON ABOVE TO BETHLEHEM THROUGH STATE DEPARTMENT AND TO EXPLAIN TO BETHLEHEM WHO HE WAS AND THAT HE COMING ON INSTRUCTIONS OF BONGO. GAVARY ALSO ASKED WHO HE SHOULD SEE AND I GAVE HIM NAMES OF JORGE SCHNEIDER AND PRESIDENT STEWART CORT.

4. DEPARTMENT AWARE, FROM PREVIOUS MESSAGES, OF GAVARY BACKGROUND. HE IS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SETIMEG WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY PROMOTION COMPANY WHICH PUTS TOGETHER FINANCIAL AND CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. HE HAS TWO SUBSIDIARIES IN GABON (SOGAPROM AND SOGAFINEX). HE IS AND HAS BEEN VERY CLOSE FRIEND OF BONGO FOR YEARS. HIS COMPANIES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN BUILDING OR IN PROCESS OF BUILDING MANY MAJOR PROJECTS IN GABON (PRESIDENT'S NEW PALACE ALREADY COMPLETED WITH 15 ADJACENT VILLAS, NEW LUXURY HOTEL IN LIBREVILLE ALMOST COMPLETED, OWENDO INSTALLATIONS FOR TRANSGABON RAILROAD CONSTRUCTION, LARGE NEW OFFICE BUILDING ALREADY COMPLETED IN CENTER OF LIBREVILLE, NEW CITY HALL AND NEW FOREIGN MINISTRY, POUBARA HYDRO-ELECTRIC DAM NEAR FRANCEVILLE UNDER CONSTRUCTION; VERY LARGE PAPER PULP FACTORY NEAR KANGO, ETC....) GAVARY HAS ALSO BEEN ENTRUSTED BY BONGO TO PULL TOGETHER FINANCING-CONSTRUCTION PACKAGE FOR SECOND STAGE OF RAILROAD (SEE SEPTTEL).

5. ACTION REQUEST: THAT DEPARTMENT PASS ABOVE TO BETHLEHEM AND, IN VIEW BONGO KEEN INTEREST IN ACTION ON PROJECT AND GAVARY'S CLOSE TIES TO BONGO, SUGGEST THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF PRESIDENT CORT HIMSELF COULD SEE GAVARY AS WELL AS SCHNEIDER AND WHOEVER ELSE BETHLEHEM DEEMED APPROPRIATE. MCKESSON

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